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Included are numerous examples showing that the Southern segregationists' arguments against school integration are factually unfounded. In most instances the performances of both Negro and white students have increased markedly when schools are integrated. Initially, Negro students are usually behind their white counterparts by one or two years, but they often close the gap within a reasonably short time. The achievements of the white students often increase, for some are afraid that they might be "shown up" by their new competition.

Pupils in the desegregated Washington, D.C., schools (about 84% Negro) are above the national averages in several subjects. Although some problems inevitably result, many Negroes have been accepted socially within the classrooms and have demonstrated leadership abilities.

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Dixie Teachers Report Their Pupils Learn Well In Mixed-Race Schools

Negro Students Lag at First But Study Hard to Catch Up With Whites, They Say

By JAMES C. TANNER
Staff Reporter of THE WALL STREET JOURNAL

NASHVILLE—Lesa Gibson and Cynthia Thornton, nine-year-old girls at Buena Vista Elementary School, consistently score high marks in fourth grade reading, writing and arithmetic. A few blocks away at North Nashville Junior-Senior High School, Geneva Ware, 12, is speedily stepping into the ranks of honor students in the seventh grade, and also is president of her home room class.

The experience of these youngsters is significant for three reasons. They're Negroes attending school with mostly white classmates. Their academic and social gains are being made in an Old South city where classroom integration began with racist bombing of an elementary school seven years ago. And, say many Southern educators, their progress is not at all untypical of Negro children studying under such circumstances.

A large number of Southern whites refuse to believe this—and, their stubborn conviction that school desegregation lowers academic and moral standards for both Negro and white children is a major reason why classroom integration is still the South's most explosive racial issue. Nor is this view confined to extreme segregationists. "Education suffers" from integration, insists a white businessman in St. Augustine, Fla., who's regarded by many as a moderate on the race question. "Regardless of merit, the fact remains that when you integrate classes you dilute the level of education."

"Normal or Nearly Normal"

But Southern schoolmen who have had actual experience with desegregation tell a different story. W. H. Oliver, Nashville school superintendent, readily concedes that Lesa, Cynthia and Geneva are outstanding among the 800 Negro youths now attending Nashville schools with whites. But, he says, the Negro students generally "are achieving normal (levels) or nearly normal from a social, emotional and scholastic standpoint, and the achievement of white students has not been adversely affected to an appreciable degree."

Other educators concede that the first Negro children to enter formerly white schools often lag behind their white classmates scholastically, because of their environment and the poor education many had been receiving in Negro schools. But once in school with whites, teachers say, the Negroes usually study hard to close the gap—and the white children often study hard to prevent having the Ne-

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groes pass them. Typical result: Tests made the year before and the year after integration in Louisville, Ky., show substantial gains in scholastic achievement for both Negro and white second, sixth and eighth graders, with the Negroes making proportionately the larger gains.

Socially too, teachers report, the Negro children usually win gradual, if grudging, acceptance from their white classmates. It's true many draw jeers and rebuffs at first, and some drop out. But educators relate many such incidents as that of a Negro high school girl in Atlanta who was snubbed all during her senior year. On the last day she was approached by more than 15 white students who asked to autograph her yearbook.

Easing Other Race Tensions?

Altogether, despite some remaining problems, many Southern educators think classroom integration is working well enough to prepare the way for eventual Dixie harmony on other race issues, too. "Students are making more rapid progress toward race acceptance than are parents," assert Southern college teachers Herbert Wey and John Corey in Action Patterns in School Desegregation, a guidebook for Southern schools that expect to integrate. "When the students now in school become parents, many of the problems that seem insurmountable will decrease in importance."

This, of course, would be far in the future. For the time being school desegregation seems rather to be inflaming Southern racial tensions, as can be gauged from some of the incidents that attended the reopening of Southern schools last fall. In Birmingham, classroom integration and white resistance to it stirred passions that led to a church bombing in which four Negro children were killed. In Tuskegee, Ala., white students have boycotted the previously all-white high school following admittance of 13 Negroes. Surry County, Va., closed its only white public school this year when seven Negroes were assigned to it by the state's pupil placement board.

Nevertheless, desegregation is making continual Southern gains. In the 17 Southern and border states which had compulsory school segregation prior to the 1954 Supreme Court ruling against it, more than one-third of the 3,053 biracial districts now have some desegregation, according to the Southern Education Reporting Service. Mississippi is now the only U.S. state with no mixed schools. In all, 318,039 of the South's 3,412,799 Negro students, or 9.3%, now attend classes with whites, and the number grows almost daily.

What Happens

As a result, Southern teachers are gaining more experience with the results of desegregation, and many Northern educators have been studying their progress and problems. Here, in some detail, is what they say usually happens when a Southern white school begins admitting Negroes:

The first Negroes to attend a formerly white school are often one to two years behind their new classmates in scholastic achievement, educators say. That's partly because their social and economic environment had given them little incentive to learn, and partly because many of them had received inferior teaching in Negro schools. Many of the children have had "traumatic experiences in learning" in poor Negro schools, and feel hopelessly behind their white classmates at first, says a school psychiatric consultant who has studied the effects of desegregation.

However, schoolmen say, once they do begin attending school with whites the Negro children usually develop a burning desire to learn enough to catch up with their new classmates. This "motivation factor compensates for deficiencies of past academic records in many cases," says R. W. Stephens, deputy superintendent of Atlanta schools. "Although we have found that Negro high school students generally are about two years behind white students, they are highly motivated, and they tend to be over-achievers in desegregated schools. The Negro student does better actually than his tests might indicate."

As a result, most teachers report, the Negroes learn more rapidly than they did in segregated schools, and soon begin closing the gap with their white classmates. When Negroes were first admitted to San Angelo, Texas, high school, says Superintendent G. B. Wadzeck, those who had received A marks in Negro schools usually dropped to B, those who had been getting B dropped to C, and so on. "Then they began to pull up," he reports.

In Nashville, Glenn Hale, principal of the Buena Vista Elementary School, finds many Negro pupils entering the second and third grades about a year behind their white classmates in learning. But, he says, by the time they leave his school at the end of the seventh grade, they "knock three or four months off" that deficiency. After one class of Negroes has gone through all 12 years of elementary and high school with whites, he believes, the gap will disappear.

Studies of the Washington, D.C., school system, which began integrating immediately after the 1954 Supreme Court decision, give

strong support for Mr. Hale's belief. In the early months of integration in 1954, achievement tests showed Washington students generally far below national standards. In progress reading tests, for example, the typical Washington sixth grader scored 4.9—the level he should have reached the ninth month of the fourth grade—against a national norm of 6.6.

In the most recent comparable tests, however, Washington sixth graders—a larger proportion of them now Negro—fell only two to four months below the national norm in reading, world knowledge and social study skills. And they surpassed the norm by two months in arithmetic, by three months in language usage, and by five months in spelling and language study skills. Some 84% of the students in Washington public schools now are Negro.

While Negro students thus learn rapidly in desegregated schools, the achievement of white pupils doesn't seem to suffer. "Even the strongly segregationist (white) children we have followed for two years have continued their studies without impairment," reports Dr. Robert Coles, a Boston child psychiatrist who spent two years in extensive research on how desegregation affects Southern students. He tells of one white student who worked much harder after integration because of the fear that several of his Negro classmates might get better grades.

The end result, says Dr. Coles: "We have yet to hear a Southern teacher complain of any drop in intellectual or moral climate in a desegregated room or school."

These happy results, of course, are not uniform from child to child. Some mediocre and poor Negro students have turned up in classes with whites. And, says Dr. Coles, "if the younger (Negro children beginning to attend class with whites) manage well, the older ones sometimes have the burden of their former years" of limited educational opportunity and incentive.

On the other hand, some Negro students have made outstanding records in desegregated classes. A Negro girl who was graduated recently from Oklahoma City's desegregated Central High School made the National Honor Society and won a scholarship to the University of Oklahoma, where she's now studying for a medical degree. In Little Rock, where Federal troops first had to be used to end violent resistance to integration, two Central High Negro seniors last term won college scholarships.

In general, J. Kenneth Morland, professor of sociology at Randolph-Macon Women's College, Lynchburg, Va., concluded in a study of classroom race-mixing that desegregation has had no "adverse effect on the achievement of the most gifted (students) of either race."

On the social side, younger white and Negro children attending desegregated classes seem to accept each other better than the older ones. Negro and white youngsters can be seen playing together on the slides and swings of almost any desegregated Southern elementary school's playground. At Nashville's Buena Vista Elementary School, Negro boys have won two of the three positions of captain on the school's safety patrol. And in Birmingham, often called the most segregated U.S. city, a Negro boy was chosen vice president of a sixth grade class that was desegregated last fall.

Even in desegregated high schools, some Negroes win quick social acceptance. When a lone Negro was admitted to the 10th grade of one high school in a small Texas town, he was elected vice president of the class his first day. A Negro also has become president of Oklahoma City's integrated Central High School student council.

Educators concede, however, that desegregation poses some other social problems for Southern schools. At North Nashville Junior-Senior High, where Negroes now are in the seventh grade, school authorities worry over whether they should permit school dances to be held this year. "We might have to curtail some of these things," says W. J. Mullins, principal. But he's enthusiastic about the reception 20 Negro parents got the other night from white parents at a school chili supper, the school's first biracial social affair.

Mr. Mullins and other school officials who know desegregation first-hand dispute segregationist arguments that race mixing brings new problems in discipline, delinquency, morals and health. They do not deny, however, that it accentuates those problems already present in the schools. It brings about some teaching changes, too.

Incoming Negro children, for example, often are grouped with whites according to their academic abilities. The ones who lag far behind scholastically are taught alongside whites of comparable academic achievements, even if these white children are younger. The brighter Negroes go into more advanced groups. This permits a speedier education pace for the fast learners.

And one Nashville teacher is making her new Negro pupils feel at home by "integrating" the bulletin board. She clips pictures of Negro children from magazines and pastes them on the board.

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